

1. AWARD NAME: INNOVATIVE PROGRAM AWARD

2. NOMINATOR:

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3. NOMINEE:

“Budgeting for the Future”
Sustainable Government Conference

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4. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

As budgets are being cut yearly and environmental concerns are becoming a higher priority, communities and governments are looking for ways to cut costs, become more environmentally friendly, and save energy. The principles of sustainable government such as reducing energy costs, creating healthier environments, reducing environmental footprints, and enhancing the quality of life are beginning to be incorporated into day to day operations of local and state governments.

The goal of this conference was to address the concerns of local officials, government leaders, and other municipalities about incorporating sustainable practices. The practices and concepts focused on during the conference would assist attendees in incorporating energy and money saving practices into their daily operations. The one-day multi-site conference allowed the attendees to share what is currently being implemented and how it can be improved or incorporated in other operations. By having speakers with examples from other governments that have succeeded, more of the audiences concerns could be addressed. Objectives include explaining the concept of sustainability, the role governments play in promotion of sustainability, and fostering the implementation of sustainable practices. Presenting budget saving ideas to the audience will help them develop future plans that incorporate such practices. The conference also served as a pilot to gauge interest in Florida Panhandle governments on this topic and focused on fostering attitude and behavior changes.

The video conferencing system, Polycom, was used as the means of delivering the conference to various sites in the Florida Panhandle and allowing speakers to present from other statewide offices without incurring travel expenses. Our main conference site was in Crestview at the Okaloosa County Extension Office with satellite attendance sites at the Leon County and Escambia County Extension Offices. Additionally, the Sarasota County Extension Office location offered a participating speaker. Bay County Extension Office, Santa Rosa County Extension Office and Wakulla County Extension Office also electronically attended the conference. In addition to the seven UF/IFAS Extension Offices, other partners included the Okaloosa County Sustainability Committee, Bay Area Resource Council, Sustainable West Florida, Leon County Management Services, Escambia County Solid Waste, Florida Green Building Coalition, Collins Center for Public Policy, and numerous vendors including AECOM Environmental, Eco\$mart, Absolute Storm Protection and others.

Eighty-six individuals attended the Sustainable Government Conference, with 23% of the participants completing evaluations at the conclusion of the event. Overall, 90% of the respondents gained a better understanding of sustainability and practical application techniques as a result of attending the conference, therefore, achieving the identified objectives. The need for more information in the area of sustainable practices delivered through similar formats, such as that of this conference, was expressed in the evaluations.

This program utilized innovative techniques to reach various areas of the Florida Panhandle by hosting speakers in four locations via the use of Polycom. Also, this conference was coordinated with the county governments, state agencies, county commissioners, and several non-profit organizations. The Sustainable Government Conference was able to reach various department heads in county and city governments and elected officials while highlighting the resources of UF/IFAS and the potential uses of video conferencing technology.

The FANREP members' roles were extensive throughout the whole process of planning, delivering and evaluating the conference. Sheila Dunning served on the Okaloosa County Sustainable Committee and worked to develop the idea and begin the coordination process. She secured the facility and coordinated the facilities and partners in the other participating counties. Topics and possible speakers were then compiled as determined by Sheila and the committee. Brooke Saari secured the speakers, agenda layout and items, and coordinated the various vendor partners in preparation of the event. Both were responsible for the coordination and facilitation of the event, including speaker introductions, material distribution, and technical support.